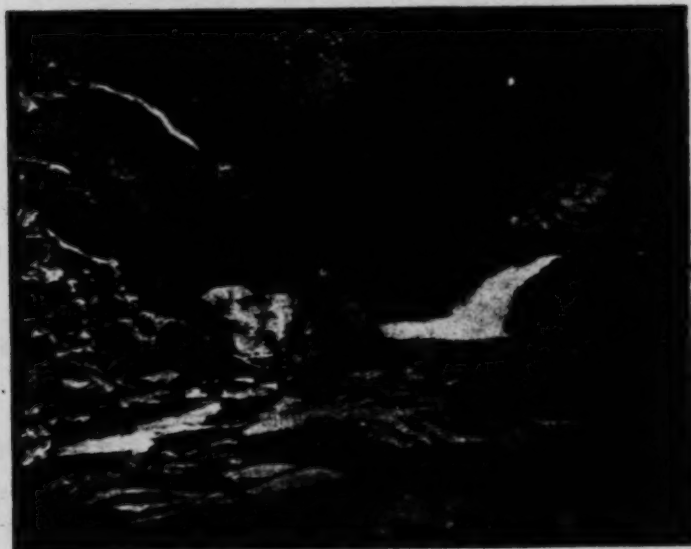


THE KAREN PEOPLE OF BURMA

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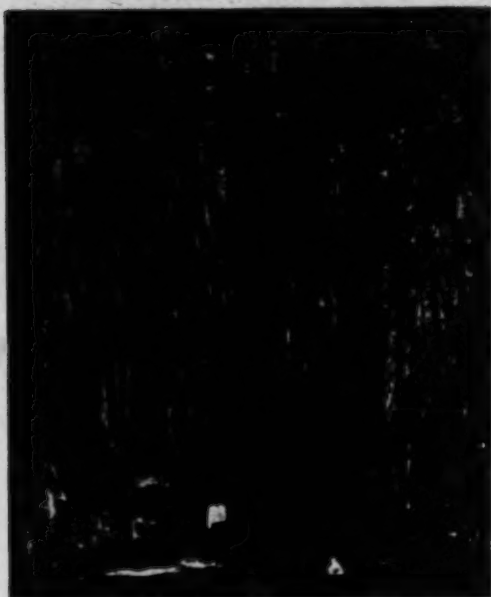
A CORNER OF THE IRAWADDY RIVER DELTA, HAKHEIN DISTRICT
These streams form the highways of this district.



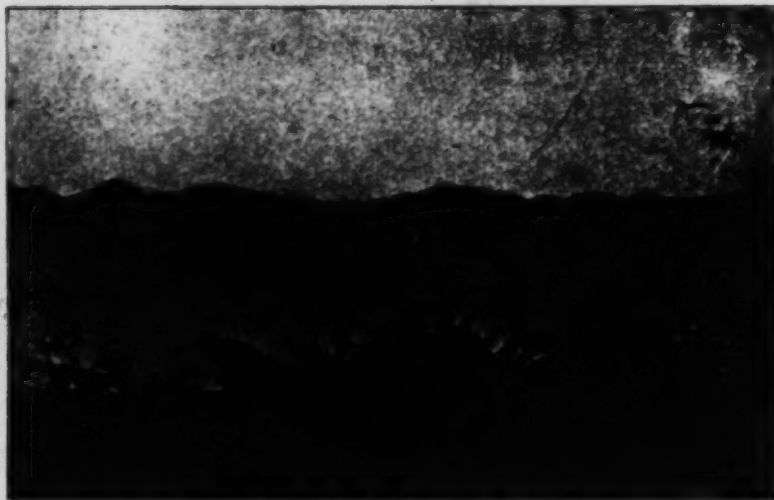
A MOUNTAIN STREAM IN BURMA
The Karen build their villages along these streams of swift-running water.

THE ORIGIN OF THE KAREN

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A PATH THROUGH THE BAMBOO JUNGLE, PHOU HILLS



THE MINING MEN IN THE PHOU HILLS

The mine sits in the valley, which makes the mountain-tops look like islands in an inland sea.

CHAPTER XXV

MOUNT "THAW THI." RELIGIOUS CULTS

THE SACRED MOUNT

778
● 133
173
773
In Karen lore mention is often made of the sacred mountain, "Thaw Thi," which was early thought to be identical with the fabulous sacred mountain of the Buddhists, "Myenmo Taung." When, however, Dr. Mason went to Toungoo, he found that "Thaw Thi" was the dominating peak of the range of hills separating the valley of the Sittang from that of the Salween—a peak evidently held in reverence by the Burmese who call it "Nattaung," that is, the mountain of the "nats" or demons. Of this range "Thaw Thi" is the most impressive peak, although it is a thousand feet lower than Mount "Pghaw Ghaw" four miles to the north, which rises to a height of 8,607 feet above sea-level and from which a wonderful view may be had over the surrounding hills. Of these two peaks "Thaw Thi" is thought to be the wife and the more important. Its summit is a wide clear space which, the people believe, is swept clean every morning by the goddess "Ta La," who has her abode there.¹

Several traditions concerning the mountain suggest that it may have been a place of veneration of the people in its neighborhood. One story connects Mount "Thaw Thi" with the flood that submerged the world, except the ridge along the top "as much as a comb."² When the flood receded, the peacock pheasant ("pgho ghaw") alighted on the summit now bearing its name. Another legend represents "Thaw Thi" as being considered the highest mountain in the world, whose sides abound with all kinds of game, these creatures being constrained to render homage to this kingly mountain. Hence, all the beasts and the birds of the air, including the tiger, bear, crocodile, wild dog, dragon, vulture, and adjutant, ascend in procession to do reverence.

¹ See p. 289.

² Dr. Mason, who is quoted in MacMahon's *The Karens of the Golden Chersonese*, 242, ff., is authority for this interpretation. A similar meaning was given me in Toungoo, but the spelling of the name of the bird and of the word meaning "as much as" differs a little from that commonly employed. These differences are probably due to local usage.